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DRAWINGS
OF WATTEAU

DRAWINGS OF THE



GREAT MASTERS

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DRAWINGS OF WATTEAU



ANTOINE WATTEAU
SHEET OF STUDIES
Red chalk

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Ph. Giraudon.

A. WATTEAU. — FEUILLES D'ÉTUDES.
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THE DRAWINGS OF ANTOINE WATTEAU

BY OCTAVE UZANNE



O artist has so happily inaugurated and represented the French art of the eighteenth century as Antoine Watteau with the assistance of his pencil, the character of his pictures, and the delicate sentimental style of his compositions. He is a witty and characteristic draughtsman as well as the ideal and representative painter of his epoch. And in a superlative manner he expressed the amorous and frivolous grace, the amiable paganism, the passionate and lively comedy, and the effeminate languor of that age.

Not only did this illusionist, who created a new art out of a renaissance mythology composed of persons and forms borrowed from Italy, succeed in idealising all the shadowy and elegant figures vowed to the cult of Cupid, but with infinite taste, and a rare feeling which transported realities into dreams, he conceived incomparable scenes, landscapes of mysterious fairy-like enchantment, with blue horizons and sleepy lakes of unsurpassable luminosity.

The life of Antoine Watteau, very short and wholly devoted to continuous effort, was only partially revealed by the writings of some of his friends, such as the Comte de Caylus, the picture-dealer Gersaint, and M. de Julienne. Yet it is impossible to follow year by year this genial artist in his *curriculum vitæ*, or to know exactly how his talent was formed. We cannot discover the exact elements which especially influenced his artistic individuality, nor can we specify his friendly relationships and his daily intercourse. Such indications would reveal the atmosphere in which he lived at Valenciennes, his native town; in Paris, where he fought against misery; and in Nogent-sur-Marne, where he died, still young, at the age of thirty-seven, exhausted and consumed by a phthisis known at the time as "le mal de langueur."

Antoine Watteau was born in 1684 in French Flanders, the son of an artizan master-tiler. He entered life sixteen years before the beginning of a century which, essentially one of frivolity and amorous dalliance, he was destined to illustrate and interpret with subtle genius. Considering the date of his birth, it is wonderful that he was not

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dominated by the pretentious and showy art which signalized the century of Louis XIV. at its apogee. The pictorial movement of the time, so sumptuous, grandiose, and solemn, which led to the art of Hyacinthe Rigaud, Mignard, and Largillière, did not carry him away towards a classical taste, nor even towards that style, impregnated by religious idealism or decorative expression, of which Simon Vouet, Eustache Lesueur, or Lebrun were for so long the undisputed masters.

Happily the young Fleming, early apprenticed by his father to an obscure artist called Gérin, did not feel inclined towards an imitation of the official painters of the end of the seventeenth century. His innate taste marked him out to be a draughtsman of delicate elegance, eurythmically charmed by the beauty of the figure and the coqueties of woman.

On the other hand, the semi-disfavour in which the little masters of Flemish painting were held at the court of the "Roi Soleil" contributed to modify the ideals of those northern artists who wished to acquire some vogue in Paris.

Under the domination of obscure teachers, prevented from following his vocation by the harshness of the master-tiler, his father (who would rather have seen his son in a profession more immediately lucrative), Antoine Watteau, to whom Julienne applied later the title "Peintre flamand de l'Académie Royale," owed much to his origin. As one of his countrymen, M. L. Cellier, remarked, he remained Flemish because of his artistic temperament, his conception of the picturesque, and the realism of his brush. Certainly, when studying the works of this rare artist, one must subscribe to this judgment. Born in Valenciennes six years after the reunion of the Flemish city to the kingdom of France, receiving his first notions of drawing and painting from the mediocre Gérin (a bad colourist, whose known works have undeniable affinities to the great masters of Antwerp, Bruges, and Ghent), Watteau spent his youth in the artistic atmosphere of Flanders. Indisputably he was impressed by Van Dyck, Rubens, Martin de Voos. Examples of their skill were ready for his admiration in the churches of Valenciennes. Rubens particularly exercised a lasting influence. Study closely the drawings of heads, which form the subjects of so many admirable works in the Louvre and the British Museum, and you will discover that a number of these sketches of female faces, although gracious and elegant, have expressions which suggest more or less remotely a Flemish type. Amidst these faces, which in pose are turned aside from the spectator, are sketches of heads in three-quarter size, forms only to be guessed at, convolutions of ears, the setting of the neck

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upon the shoulders, vague and sleepy eyes, and profiles which are not truly French, still less Parisian. A comparison of the physiognomies of the chief characters in his painted works, and of the types of his most remarkable pencil drawings, would supply an absolute proof of the accentuated Flemish atavism of this first great master of his age.

However, it is through the absence of an active education imparted by professors of authority and suggestion that Watteau was able to acquire the superior originality which characterises his works. His originality cannot be compared with that of any other artist, unless we except the engraved compositions of Gillot, who became afterwards his friend and master. Yet if Watteau borrowed from Gillot only his taste for the protagonists of Italian comedy, he surpassed him in skill with the genius of his composition and the magnificent style of his design.

Child of a picturesque city, son of an active and industrious race, this French Fleming was immediately amused by the daily spectacle which met his eyes—charlatans, small tradespeople, professors of the gutter and the streets, town-criers. He received vivid and deeply-marked impressions, at the same time sincerely felt, of all the minor scenes, markets, processions and other enjoyments which, in spite of the wars, his countrymen were accustomed to engage in throughout the year.

In this attention given to the minor facts of town life, and to this influence of an atmosphere full of emulation, are to be found the origin of that taste for the little scenes of the people and sketches of trade which, in the "*Figures de Différents Caractères*," Watteau was to draw such an abundant number.

Until the age of eighteen, Watteau led in his native town the dull existence of a painter-apprentice. His professor Gérin being dead, one of his friends, the merchant Gersaint, relates how "he left the paternal home, without money and without even clothes. His intention was to seek refuge in Paris, and to establish himself under the roof of some painter where he could make decisive progress." Abandoned without the slightest help, and deprived of all resources, Watteau arrived in a noisy metropolis full of pitfalls for a young provincial. He was compelled to enter the service of an artist of small attainments called Métayer. From thence he passed into the house of a manufacturer of church pictures on the Pont Notre Dame, and here he painted a large number of figures of St. Nicholas for the use of the pious. It is not necessary to insist upon the monotonous and pitiable nature of this work for a youth of gentle disposition and delicate health. Many of his biographers consider that these early

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privations and sufferings were the cause of the disease which carried him off at so early an age.

Circumstances, however, luckily relieved Antoine Watteau from the task at which he was perishing, and awoke in his proud, scrupulous, and impatient mind the acute perception of his personality. His friendship with the engraver Gillot was the first event to favour the development of a talent which until then nothing had been able to arouse. Passionately interested in the reproduction and interpretation of the scenes of Italian comedy, Gillot managed to inspire his new pupil with a taste for this delightful stage. Léandre and Lélío, Arlequin and Columbine, Mezzetin, Pantalon, the doctor of Bologna, and Gilles soon became familiar. A world of witty but refined gaiety, of smart and voluptuous grace, charged an imagination now less sad. His thoughts became more peopled with images and pictorial conceptions. With the friendship of Gillot, Watteau knew and understood fantasy.

Afterwards he made the acquaintance of Claude Audran, the keeper of the beautiful palace of the Luxembourg, who employed him to execute some ornamental figures. Here, with the great pictures of the masters before his eyes, Watteau discovered the secrets of painting. And a second circumstance was a powerful aid towards the revelation and discovery of his genius. At the Luxembourg Queen Marie de Medicis had gathered together that gallery of works by Rubens which she had commissioned for herself. These paintings had been left in the palace, and Watteau, seeing them, was dazzled. It was from an intelligent contemplation of these masterpieces that the son of the master-tiler of Valenciennes acquired that ardent warm colour which makes some of his best canvases (such as the "Antiope" in the Louvre) closely related to those by the master of Antwerp. Watteau received from Gillot the elements of his inspiration, the accessories, and—if one may put it so—the *mise-en-scène* of his works. From Rubens he acquired the verve and brilliancy of tone and colour which excite our admiration. Watteau found himself in full possession of his talent; but he did not servilely adapt to his own use these two essential constituents of his genius. Of the Italian scenes of Gillot, and of the overflowing and strong characteristics of Rubens, the young artist borrowed only the indications. Awakened by these influences, he did not become their prisoner. Besides, at the house of the connoisseur Crozat, Watteau was able to see works by masters of the earlier schools, such as Titian. They strengthened his earlier influences, but the artist did not fall under their domination.

His soul, charming, light, ironical, and supple, the soul of a

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sylph, overflowed with fantasy and tenderness. Helped by influences so much in keeping with his aspirations, in a delicate and impulsive age, it was not long ere this soul gave proofs of charm and power. And then, by a spell in which genius became visible, out of this Italian atmosphere, nebulous as a vapour, from this astonishingly beautiful Flemish palette, with an observation and realism which he inherited from his race, Antoine Watteau was marvellously able to compose and innovate the most expressive art of the French genius of the eighteenth century.

This is not his only strength. There remains the exquisite and adorable spirit of poetry which was not inspired by the influences which woke up his genius. In the presence of that anecdotic side of his talent, fully marked in the "Figures de Différents Caractères" engraved by M. de Julienne, we must admit that Watteau has a more durable and enchanting side. It is in this aspect of his figures and landscapes, ethereal, impalpable, and aerial, that his art attains such a fairy-like appearance.

This illusion, azure and limpid, as if bathed in vapour, envelops all his compositions, no matter whether he painted or drew. It drowns them in a trembling mist; and for this very reason it makes them visions of unreality, which contrast strangely with the age in which they were executed.

Under the Regency, when the licence of manners reached a climax, Watteau, strange to say, escaped the career of a libertine. His cold, reserved disposition and natural modesty defended him against the contagion from which even the most beautiful characters of the time were not free. In Watteau's art there is nothing base, nothing immodest. This painter of "fêtes galantes" is never offensive or licentious. Even his nudes are pure. The suggestive draperies of Fragonard and Boucher, the shameless art of the minor masters who surround them (such as Baudouin, Lawreince, and many others who have made the fortune of the print dealers), are as far removed from the art of Watteau as a novel by the Abbé Prévost, a tale by Diderot, or a story by Voltaire are from those Shakespearian plays which, like a dream, appear through a colonnade or in the midst of a park in Verona. The gallantry which Watteau inaugurated in his paintings, imitated by his disciples Pater and Lancret alone, is peculiar to his talent and his heart. For with Watteau genius and disposition cannot be separated. It is precisely because this artist was disinclined to indulge in the debauchery of his contemporaries that his art contains none of the preoccupations with which a dissolute society delighted itself. Shy to excess with women, even more so than with

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men, this delicate artist never knew the frenzy of the rough passions which fired the heart in those easy times. With a discretion that nothing ever interfered with, he watched the "fêtes galantes" simply as a spectator.

Watteau's frivolity is superior to his age—is, in fact, beyond it. Study his drawings and pictures at the Louvre, the Hermitage, the British Museum, the Wallace Gallery, or at Chantilly, Potsdam, Lille, and Valenciennes. Place together these delightful views with their pretty promenades—these love gatherings so transparent and suave—and compare them with what you know of the Regency. Then endeavour to realise the candour and poetry Antoine Watteau had to make use of in order to conceal skilfully all the corruption and disorder of his time under the satin mask of his fantasy. Watch these lovers and their mistresses in any one of his pictures—the "Fête Champêtre" in the Museum at Dresden, or the "Assemblée dans un Parc" in the Louvre. There is no work in the world in which the quintessence of refined "galanterie," the most subtle and captivating grace, the most seductive tenderness, are expressed better or in greater measure. Who does not know these scenes? Reproductions have made the whole universe familiar with them. They have an instantaneous and agreeable charm, which is not only extremely fascinating but truly durable.

"Watteau," wrote the brothers de Goncourt, who adored and sang the praises of this delicate master, "Watteau has renovated grace." And it is this grace, and yet again this grace, so clever and so touching, which betrays the devotion he bore towards woman. See how in his paintings he caught these charming ladies of his time; how well he knew their ways, their manners, their attractions. Nobody ever rivalled him in drawing that little fold at the back of their dress which his pencil made so distinctive a mark of his art. Attentive to everything which surrounds these fays, he excels in rendering with his restless pencil these fugitive companions whose tenderness brings a nostalgia of dream.

Seated or standing on beautiful lawns, surrounded by the graceful foliage of high-cut hedges, under the shadow of quinconce, and on the borders of limpid streams, these couples talk quietly together. Their draperies are half-French, half-Italian, often more French than Italian. The satin of the women's skirts falls into the most graceful folds; their lace and fine linen are like wings; their coiffure, though simple and unaffected, is ravishing; they have the soft faces of coquettes, and they listen attentively to amorous discourse. And the young lords, clothed in mantles, toques on their heads, fine legs,

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round and graceful arms, some with musical instruments, others with cane or sword, but often stretched at the delicate feet of their mistresses, are confessing their tenderest thoughts in a twilight propitious to secrecy.

In painting under a sky of fairyland the "Embarquement pour l'Île de Cythère" (it is in the collection of the Emperor of Germany, but there is a splendid duplicate at the Louvre), Watteau has gathered together the essentials of his art of gallantry and idealism. No work of his bears so markedly the imprint and character of his unique talent. A world unknown to terrestrial humanity lives on these banks. The pilgrims, who, in their dreamlike barge, are journeying towards the shores of Cytherea, belong to the happy days of fantasy. Yet, if you look attentively at these couples, an oppression and a melancholy—very human—easily pierces the veil of gaiety. Anxiety and fear appear beneath these masks. The genius of Watteau, often sickly, has left in this apotheosis of frivolity a human evidence of the sufferings which tormented the great artist. With the "Finette," with the "Indifférent," the same anguish equally strangles the delicate hearts of these little masks. The serious and concentrated look of the pretty young woman playing the "finette" and the serious as well as disenchanted air of the "Indifférent" dancing and showing his heels in a park are revelations of this art of Watteau, where everything is a feast of pleasure, but where a secret evil is hidden away, and where one discovers (if one looks attentively) that consumptive tremor from which the chilly Watteau suffered all his life.

And yet, in these works, which, more than anything else, are such examples of his genius, one must not attribute the seductions they possess only to the figures which Watteau has drawn. The background also participates in its own way in the extreme charm of these little scenes so cleverly arranged. With Watteau the background has an importance which many critics have not paid sufficient attention to. Silver or golden, ambered by autumn, or by a beautiful sunset, or lit up by the arising Aurora, these backgrounds are not so imaginative as some would have us believe. Watteau, who well advised Jean Baptiste Pater to study unceasingly "nature itself," did not fail to follow his own precept. Caylus, who knew him well in the Luxembourg at the house of the keeper Audran, said that "he drew incessantly the trees of this beautiful garden, which had been left to grow less trimmed and combed than the other royal parks. It supplied him with an infinite number of points of view." Those who followed Watteau to the end of his sorrowful life, especially

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Gersaint and Julienne, noted with what attentive care he exerted himself to sketch in the Isle de France, where he lived "en villégiature," at Montmorency, where M. de Crozat invited him to paint "Les Saisons," and at Nogent and Vincennes, where, later on, before his death, he traced a great many "thoughts." The truth is that these backgrounds, as well as the figures which are placed in them, are almost always transfigured by their individual charm and their refined and agreeable vision.

Watteau is as much unknown as a painter of gardens, parks, coverts, so peculiar to the France of his age, as he is celebrated for the spontaneity of his subjects, the suavity of his faces, and the famous *scènes galantes*. After having said how well this artist knew how to incorporate poetry, individuality, and voluptuousness in his treatment of the young ladies of an easy-going age, the critic has too little insisted upon his wonderful talent as a colourist, which sparkles in most of his flowery landscapes where unrolls the dream-story of his *jeux d'amour*. In his own *genre* Watteau is somewhat apart from those who assisted in the evolution of the formerly restricted and almost despised art of landscape. Watteau is a landscape painter who has no connection with any other. He had no master, no pupil, and he resembles his precursors Poussin and Claude Gellée no more than he does the great romantic school of the future. If it be true that Watteau belongs by right of his *genre* to the masters who embellished the galleries of the eighteenth century, still he cannot be classed entirely with them, as we can see when we study the backgrounds of the peaceful nature he adored, which he made the scene of nearly all his canvases. In them he appears a subtle and enchanting magician, a colourist of extraordinary charm; a poet who might have painted for Shakespeare the landscape backgrounds for the "Midsummer Night's Dream," "As You Like It," or "The Tempest"; a luminous artist of dreams, to whom Gluck might certainly have gone for the mysterious *mise-en-scène* of his "Elysée Orphique." With an inimitable fantasy he pictures all the glades of the forest, of islands, and of the most divine woods. He is a painter of fairyland, and his landscapes, as I have already explained, belong to that same happy country.

"Watteau came down from the heaven of the fairies," said M. Paul Maintz. And the De Goncourts wrote, "How he adorns grace—indeed woman herself. He makes earth his accomplice, the woods are *galantes*, the fields are filled with music, the groves are propitious to the calling of echoes, from overbowering trees hang baskets of flowers. Deserts, far from the jealous world, are touched

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with the magic brush of a Servandoni, refreshed by fountains, peopled with marbles, statues, naiads, spotted by the trembling shadows of the leaves . . . a country joyous and radiant."

It is against the background of this impalpable, coloured landscape that, according to his biographer d'Argenville, he loved sometimes to paint a beautiful servant he had. The "Antiope Surprised by Jupiter" (in the Louvre) shows what a perfect comprehension of the nude Watteau possessed. It testifies to his rich qualities of drawing and painting, and it proves that his science of the human body did not hide itself—as some will have it—under loosely draped and fantastic clothes. Here the ambered landscape, the light in which she is bathed, and the vigour of the background from which she steps, add strangely to her beauty. To these marvellous nudes, which are rare in his work, it is well to add a beautiful "Lady at her Toilet," painted in London (it passed into the Wallace collection), where the extremely fine and unique body, of a milky whiteness, has an equal charm.

But the nude was not the aim towards which Watteau was most willingly striving. It is in those works, of an iridescent movement, that we have the *genre* in which he most delighted. Fashion was not foreign to his witchcraft. Watteau loved to paint a clothed woman, because he had learned how her supple and charming body animated the satin, and how the velvet, fine linen and lace, the infinite shapes of varied dresses, shimmered with life. Thus we have all these attitudes of coquetry to be found in his numerous drawings in sanguine, pretty faces, bending forward or in profile—all those graceful modes of expression in which women are past mistresses of seduction. To catch woman so by surprise—and the woman of a time essentially feminine—was to reveal the very soul of his age. We have said how idealistically Watteau could adorn this soul, and in adorning woman in his delicate and genial manner he had accustomed himself to seeing her in the midst of a stage. The Italian fantasy in which he had learned to express himself when with Gillot was marvellously adapted by him. From it came the delicious *mises-en-scène*, the games, the assemblies of actors, of which he painted such a number. The friend of Lesage, at Sirois', initiated at Crozat's to all the fantastic ideas which Scarron has put in his "Roman Comique," he was a curious but attentive idler, who carefully noted all the open-air sights, such as the travelling comedians which the fairs of Saint Laurent and Saint Germain brought to Paris. He converted all this into a theatre of dreams—not wholly French or Italian—only to be played at twilight or moonlight in the palace of the fays. What is more significant

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and to the point than the "Masques" in the Spencer collection? Arlequin and Léandre simper in the distance, Scaramouche smiles, Lélia or Columbine offers a pretty face, serious and with a grave coquetry. Finally, in the foreground, Pierrot, lilywhite and soft, dreamy and immaculate, remains immobile. Already he has that air of candour which one will see in Gilles.

"Gilles" was given to the Louvre by Monsieur La Caze. It is a very fine work, one of the greatest Watteau painted, a harmony in white, which is often exquisite with its expressive and delicate ingenuity. By Gilles the soul of comedy opens a blue eye, and all around appear the smiling faces of the actors. Particularly touching is the expression of dreamlike resignation which Gilles bears. And "L'Indifférent" (at the Louvre) and the "Donneur de Sérénades" (at the Musée Condé) alone possess this overpowering grace, this smiling but crushing sense of the inevitable. Elegiac, and more visibly inspired, is the "Mezzetin" of the cabinet of M. de Julienne, who, seated on a mossy bank of hornbeam, makes a gesture of fatigue and disenchantment whilst waking the quiet accents of a plaintive mandoline.

Being thus the draughtsman who chronicled all the parades, the impromptus, the curious little comedies which the men and women of that age played amongst themselves, Watteau, more than anybody else, ought to have delighted in the other great parades, the play of laces as well as of the sword which the wars of that time really were. For instance, when the troops of Villars were fighting the enemy around Valenciennes, Watteau amused himself with the scenes of camp life, soldiers on the march, reviews accompanied by music, and all the shifting evolutions of the army. And as he was a man of soft and delicate disposition, and guarded himself against sights of blood and violence, he would only see in these noisy military spectacles their fine apparel of theatrical effect. "When a military painter," says so justly one of his biographers, speaking on this subject, "he puts history aside as epopee; he contents himself with fixing these scenes in his eye and having his fantasy amused for an instant." The "Campement Militaire" (Hermitage Museum), the "Campement—Halte d'Armée" (Glasgow Gallery), the "Marche de Soldats" (Nantes Museum), and the "Escorte d'Équipages," which belonged to the artist Eugène Carrière, all strongly enunciate this point. The freedom, the fantastic air of refinement and gallantry which reigned in these camps, give them an added wildness. And the little scenes which the soldiers enact are more picturesque than truly martial. Here the observant side of Watteau's character appears.

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The Fleming, curious as to details, with little notes, small sketches, and rough outlines, shows himself anew. And this "Soldat et la Cantinière," this "Tambour Battant de la Caisse," this "Spadassin Avançant son Épée," this "Cavalier Bièn en Selle," this "Officier en Surtout" (engraved by Desplaces), are many testimonies to a happy realism, to a conscientious study of attitudes and movements—in a word, the common expressions of men-at-arms. In all these sketches of camp life we approach a Watteau who interests us deeply, and who, as a draughtsman, excels himself.

Second prize of Rome in 1709, the young artist, twenty-five years old, was not accepted for the journey owing to the strictness of the rules formulated by the Academy. He never saw Rome. Are we to regret it? Would Rome have pleased this great fantastic? And would not Venice, with its aerial perspectives of domes, its ancient palaces, its sleeping canals, and all its splendours, the Venice of the two Canaletti and Guardi, have inspired him more? His genial intuition of Italy is a curious characteristic of this gallicised Fleming. Watteau had no kinship to Vanloo and Lagrenée. It was from his heart, and not from his models, that this magician took his fairy landscapes. Although he had seen the canvases of Rubens at Audran's, and the great Venetian masters in the collection of the rich amateur Crozat, and even met personally a Venetian, the gay and stout pastellist of Chioggia, Rosalba Carriera, he remained uninfluenced by them except in his technic. As for the rest, these happy gatherings of little figures, these compositions of luminous, delicate, and tender decoration, all the poetry which he introduced into these incomparable drawings he owes to his own charming talent and character.

Always interested in a life which, however, was often a burden to him, fond of movement and novelty, Watteau in the execution of his crayon drawings appears as an exquisite and unrivalled realist. It should not be surprising, for everything in art induces us to believe that works of the purest idealism, of the most abstract thought, and of the most lyrical fantasy borrow the greater part of their beauty from an exact study of nature. But study, we know, is the constant research after precise and accurate drawing. To this point of view the portfolios of Albert Dürer, the marvellous sketchbooks of Leonardo da Vinci, are potent witnesses. Look at their notes, their pencil drawings, their rapid sketches; an arm taken here, the outline of an allegorical figure belonging in its origin to a woman in the crowd, all these different subjects have been caught, copied, gathered, and studied from Nature. Watteau, who was capricious,

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often saw the world only as the representation of an opera, with figures in apotheosis moving under a blue sky. But at heart he was a sincere and conscientious workman. Beneath his dreams, as a support in fact, was the robust and delicious talent of the student, the extraordinary energy of the draughtsman, intent upon noting every detail in his figures and subjects. Here the practical side of this Fleming appears, and it is the reason why this great painter was also a prodigious draughtsman.

The quantity of sketches, of "thoughts" he used to call them himself, which he produced during his short but fecund life can hardly be numbered. Perhaps no artist of the Italian renaissance did so much, so exquisite, so varied, and so impeccable in honesty of execution. Four hundred of these sketches came forward at the sale of the effects of his dearest, best, and most affectionate friend, Jean de Julienne. At his death the master had bequeathed others to his friend Gersaint, to Haranger, and to his admirer in London, Playeur. The fate of these drawings has been varied. The Louvre and the British Museum have preserved a great number, the best of which are reproduced in this volume. There are some at Potsdam and Lille; Chantilly possesses a fine example; the Goncourts acquired lovely ones; the collection of the Rothschilds in France, and some of the private collections in England, are well supplied.

During the last century numerous sale catalogues mention these coveted works. A study of their prices since 1830, when they first became appreciated, until the present moment, when they are watched for by both hemispheres as a lucky chance, would be of the highest interest. Recently the Municipal Museum of Paris (the Petit Palais of the Champs-Élysées) exhibited a remarkable specimen. Like most of the work in sanguine, it is heightened by bistre and white Italian chalk. Grouped together on the same sheet are views of the back, of the face in profile, and three-quarter view of seven pretty female heads, and two male heads, one bare-headed and the other in a three-cornered hat, all exceedingly expressive.

The whole of Watteau the draughtsman is there, his *brio*, his grace, his vivacity, and his acuteness.

The drawings in the Louvre, notably the sheet on which are arranged in much the same manner four female heads, and three negroes, is extremely picturesque and full of life. And another one with the little woman with a collar, and the roguish faces in no way flattered, but simply picked out from the crowd, are unrivalled. Let us mention at the same time the adorable drawing in which a beautiful young woman, with nude torso, her face hidden by the arm she is

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holding up, presents a lovely bosom and shoulders of absolutely the purest contour.

Watteau the feminist displays there his true character, his subtle grace, his fantasy, his expressive atmosphere of an art which he alone possesses, which he alone was able to carry to such a wonderful pitch.

It seems that he was born a draughtsman, and that all his vital strength, all his intellectual power, were directed towards the joy of sketching from nature.

He never tired of filling up his album with minor sketches, notes, details, of which the lightness, the freshness of the sensation, the brilliant success completely overwhelm us. The essence of a contour, all that could possibly be extracted from a model, he realised with life and spirit, as a *virtuoso* cherishes the instrument he plays upon.

With pencils white and red he renders the pearly transparence of flesh and the shivering skin of his models. In adding the black pencil he completes the suppleness of his interpretation, and expresses every shade and degree better than the cleverest pastellist. In accentuating the sinuous and firm outline Watteau created life, and in exaggerating the whites he added a mischievous, playful luminosity of his own which brings out the dimples in the cheek, plays across the collarettes, lights up the foreheads, gives a sparkle to the eyes, and brings a sharp and voluptuous glaze over the lips.

"From the heads which cover the drawings of this *gentil* draughtsman," says one of his critics, M. Gabriel Séailles, "the spirit of France beams forth. You will not find in them the morbidness of Milan or the German slowness. They are alert faces which cannot remain silent, features which even when at rest are charged with movement. The lips are slightly curved, the mouth and eyes are on the verge of a smile, the line of the nose has a tremble, the nostrils quiver. The silk robes, the little Venetian mantles, the rumpled but smart dresses through the clever indications of the folds of the drapery are made to live. It is the mimicry of wit. Little affectations accompany the gallant conversations, the attitudes which underline the 'Yes,' the 'No,' the 'Perhaps!' the expressive gestures and intonations which are half the wit in the soft understandings of these light conversations. Look at this man in profile, a 'tam-o'-shanter' on his head, a white collarette round his neck, the eyes bright and open, the curved nose of which the line trembles (Louvre, 1326); and these women (Louvre, 1325), one in profile, with downcast eyes, whose ingenuousness is only the expectation of love; others in full or three-quarter face, with bosoms half out of the lace bodices, exercising every play of smile and glance; waving hands—hands

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that speak, fingers which stretch along the edge of the fan; 'all these morning thoughts,' where the painter has mingled his dream with the study of nature, allow the work to take life and to prepare itself slowly; the handsome youths, the flute-players, the women who rise from their seats, the personages and groups which you find arranged in the landscapes of the *fêtes galantes*."

But Watteau the draughtsman, however remarkable he may be found in these pages, is not wholly here. One must study him again in the "Figures de Différents Caractères," engraved so carefully by M. de Julienne. His Flemish disposition appears this time in an agreeable and vivid realism. A "Petit Rémouleur," a sort of *gagne-petit*, sharpening knives on a grindstone, is his masterpiece in this set. Watteau never did better. This little man, intent upon his work, dressed in a cloak, a three-cornered hat on his head, with his expert foot turning the wheel, is in the master's best manner. And one must add to it the "Porte-balle," the "Frère Mendiant," the "Savoyard," the "Marchand de Fruits," which were in the Schwitzer collection, the "Maraîcher," certain military and civil sketches, and certain "grimaces" of an extreme suppleness. To the end Watteau indulged in this side of a personal art in which he excelled. Suffering from the malady which was to cut him off, having settled in Nogent, near Paris, with the intendant La Febvre, he was still busy drawing numerous rural sketches, little peasants, horsemen, and even views of the village of Vincennes, all bearing the imprint of that perfection which his hand never lost for an instant.

In the year 1720 Watteau went to London. We do not know the conditions he travelled under or why he took so mysterious a journey. The consequences, however, were fatal to his health. Embittered by disease he was no longer happy in Paris, and from Métayer to Audran, from Gillot to Crozat, from Vleughels to Sirois or Gersaint, friends with whom he lived in turn, Watteau continued to change his domicile. This betrays the feverish restlessness of his actions. The journey to London must have been undertaken as a distraction from his illness and consequent depression. He seems to have engaged in it with enthusiasm. A drawing in sanguine at the British Museum, representing the good engraver Bernard Baron, shows that when in London Watteau searched out his compatriots. Nicholas Dorigny, the engraver of the cartoons at Hampton Court, Laguerre, the author of the "Triumph of Marlborough," were to him fortunate acquaintances. But there were Englishmen, too, of the best society; the famous friend of Voltaire, Dr. Mead, who no doubt assisted the

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sick artist, for Watteau painted two fine works for him—the “Italian Comedians,” conceived in his most cherished *genre*, and the “Amour Paisible,” a canvas of soft and enchanting tenderness. In London also Watteau painted that unique nude, the “Toilette du Matin,” also called “Lady at her Toilet,” which is now in the Wallace collection as a witness to the realism which existed before the age of impressionism. In this work Watteau foreshadows Degas.

It is clear that Watteau during his sojourn in London was much sought after by people of taste. The vogue for his paintings continued throughout the eighteenth century amongst the distinguished amateurs of the kingdom. Rothemburg, the purveyor to the galleries belonging to Frederick II., wrote later concerning this to his Prussian master. “Nearly all the works Watteau executed are in England, where they are infinitely prized.” At the sale of Mead’s property several things were scattered, especially drawings. A “Bust of a Woman,” a “Mezzetin,” passed to the Groult collection; and in the collection belonging to Miss James one is able to admire the whole series devoted to doctors and apothecaries: “Apothecary Holding a Syringe,” “Boyish Apothecaries,” “A Man in a Dressing-gown,” “Watteau’s Doctor,” etc., all drawn with a vivid satire almost revengeful, for the spite of the sick man betrays itself in the pencil of the artist. Upset, as Gersaint wrote, by “the bad atmosphere of London, where the coal smoke is very bad for consumptives,” Watteau decided to see France again. It was in the summer of 1720, and the painter had but a year to live.

Upon his return to Paris Watteau lived for a short while with Gersaint. For him he undertook the famous “Enseigne,” still to be admired in the German royal collection, its freshness undiminished. This beautiful work was the last supreme effort of Watteau. The details of the figures which one is able to see in the Clément de Ris collection, drawn in three colours, notably the “Homme penché sur la Caisse d’Emballage,” attest to the probity with which the master composed his subjects. Then came the rigorous winter of 1720-21. The artist’s health received a rude shock, and when the summer arrived he was compelled to leave the city and find refuge at Nogent-sur-Marne with the intendant Le Febvre. The leisure his illness allowed him was employed in designing many figures and landscape sketches. He also painted several religious subjects, and a “Crucified Christ,” very different in manner and inspiration from anything he had conceived before. His greatest desire was to return and die in his native country, to see for a last time Valenciennes. But consumption reaching an incurable stage forbade him. On the 18th July, 1721,

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this delightful artist quitted the earth for a heaven of fairies, where his glory will reign.

He left behind him an art, a *genre* which his disciples Pater and Lancret continued for some time, but without any possible comparison with the creative genius of their master. The collectors who possessed his work for a period restrained themselves from submitting their treasures to the degradation of the sale room. But the eighteenth century, as it drew to a close, did not always remember its earlier enthusiasm for an artist whose talent, together with that of Chardin, remains its greatest honour in painting. The disgrace which fell on his canvases during the Empire and Restoration was even excessive. The success of the painter David, the return to academism and the antique pastiche, killed the taste for these masterpieces of a refined and poetical art. It is said that the beautiful "Embarquement pour Cythère," which is nothing less than a marvel, served as a target for David's pupils, who, in the studios of the Louvre, stained the canvas with their pellets of bread. This disgrace, however, was not alone for Watteau; it extended to Chardin. Time has done justice to the two masters. To-day Chardin is recognised as the most supreme artist in still-life and little domestic interiors. Watteau is unanimously glorified. In Paris, London, Potsdam, and in the Hermitage, he occupies the place of honour as the most characteristic genius of a century of French art. This position no other artist but he can fill. The art of Watteau consists of form, refinement, light, and grace.

This artist, the precursor of all the gallant and delicate art of the eighteenth century, was perhaps above anything else a true draughtsman; and if, owing to some cataclysm, his painted work were to disappear so as to leave not a trace in our remembrance, his drawings alone would be sufficient to secure him a glorious place between the most powerful and vital creators of life. We have had after Watteau several great draughtsmen, such as Boucher, Fragonard, Cochin, Gravelot, Moreau le jeune, Gabriel de St. Aubin. Ingres was perhaps the last of this French series, but none of these masters outrivalled in subtlety, in grace, in adorable delicacy of touch and spirit of composition the art of the drawings of the master of Valenciennes. Watteau the draughtsman is comparable with the greatest names of Flanders and the Italian and German schools, but even they never surpassed his mastery over the pencil.

OCTAVE UZANNE.



STUDIES OF FEMALE HEADS

Photo, Braun, Clément
BRITISH MUSEUM



Courtesy of Dr. N. Beets

WATTEAU'S DRAWING AFTER RUBENS'S PORTRAIT OF A GIRL



STUDY OF A GIRL SEATED .

BRITISH MUSEUM

Walter after the war



STUDY OF FEMALE HEADS

BRITISH MUSEUM



Ange Constantini dans « Mezzetin » par Watteau



TWO STUDIES OF A
NEGRO'S HEAD

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"POISSON" DRESSED AS A PEASANT

BRITISH MUSEUM

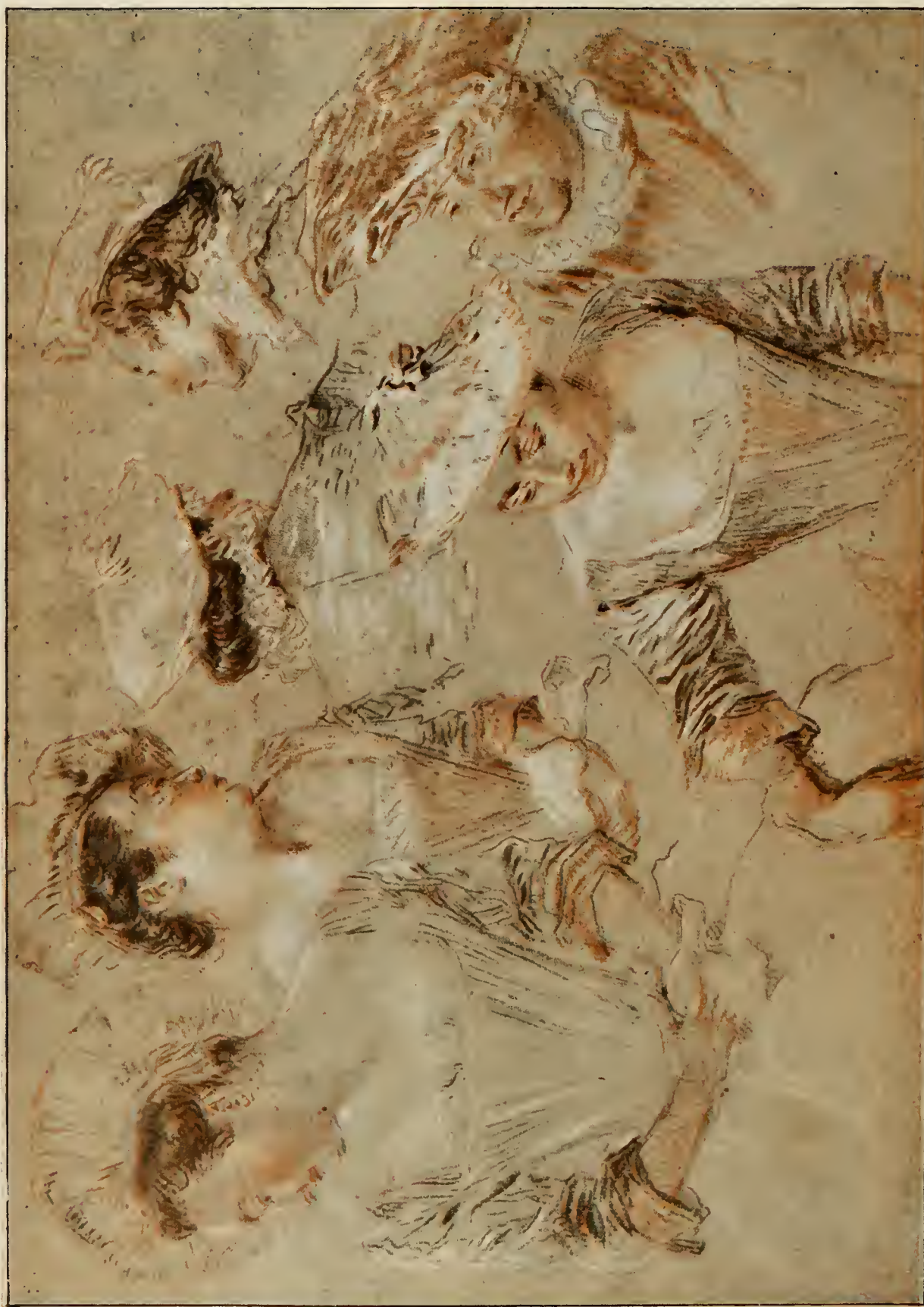


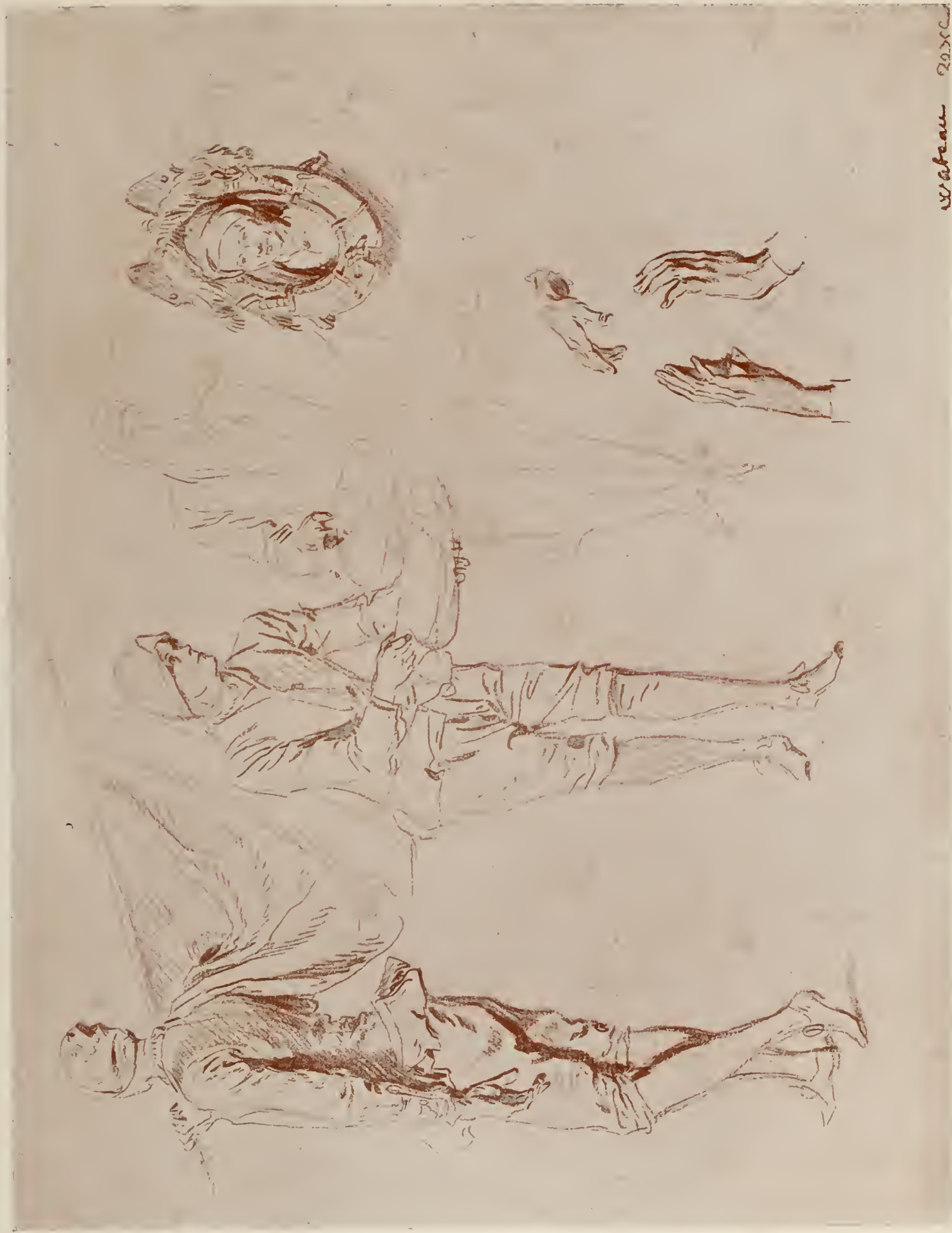
Ph. Giraudon.

A. WATTEAU. — SOLDATS AU REPOS.
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STUDIES OF FIGURES OF MEN





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STUDIES OF TWO FEMALE HEADS

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STUDIES OF HANDS

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PLATE XIV



PORTRAIT OF A FRENCH ABBÉ

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PORTRAIT OF BERNARD BARON ENGRAVING





STUDIES OF TWO LADIES SEATED, AND A MAN PLAYING A FLUTE



STUDIES IN RED CHALK OF A WOMAN SEATED



VIEW OF A GIRL SEATED ON THE GROUND

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WHOLE LENGTH FIGURES OF A LADY AND GENTLEMAN

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STUDY OF THREE FEMALE HEADS

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THREE STUDIES OF MALE FIGURES DANCING



STUDY OF A YOUTH SEATED

BRITISH MUSEUM



Old Woman, by Antoine Watteau. Drawing in red and black chalk. Actual size. (Mr. Augustine Birrell)



SEATED FIGURE OF A BEGGAR WOMAN

BRITISH MUSEUM



STUDIES OF HEADS

Photo, Braun, Clément
LOUVRE



STUDIES OF FEMALE HEADS

Photo, Braun, Clément
LOUVRE



Photo, Braun, Clément
LOUVRE

THREE STUDIES OF YOUNG GIRLS



Photo, Braun, Clément
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Photo, Braun, Clément
LOUVRE

THREE STUDIES OF MEN IN COSTUME



STUDY OF A NUDE MAN KNEELING

Photo, Braun, Clément
LOUVRE



Ph. Giraudon.

A. WATTEAU. — FIGURE DE THÉÂTRE.
Musée du Louvre.



TWO FIGURES OF MEN IN FANCY COSTUME

Photo, Braun, Clément
LOUVRE





Watteau.



Watteau.



STUDY OF A WOMAN SEATED

Photo, Braun, Clément
CHANTILLY



Photo, Braun, Clément

STUDY FOR "SPRING"



Photo Goupil.

WATTEAU. — ÉTUDE D'HOMME. — (Pierre noire et sanguine)



Photo, Braun, Clément

STUDY FOR "AUTUMN"



Photo, Braun, Clément



Photo, Braun, Clément



STUDIES OF TWO WOMEN SEATED

Photo, Braun, Clément



LADY AND FLUTE-PLAYER

Photo, Braun, Clément



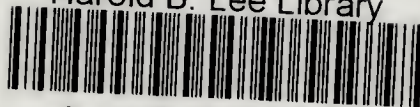
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